

VZCZCXYZ0008
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #0759/01 0791435
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 191435Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7214
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000759

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: ACTING U/S FRIED'S MARCH 17 MEETING WITH RUSSIAN
DIRECTOR ANTONOV ON CFE

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Russell. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Meeting on the margins of the 2 2 in Moscow March 17, Acting Undersecretary for Political Affairs Daniel Fried and Russian Director for Security and Disarmament Anatoliy Antonov led delegations in a long discussion of outstanding issues on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Focusing principally on Georgia and Moldova, Antonov presented a contradictory position, insisting the U.S. was inappropriately seeking to resolve broader political issues with Georgia and Moldova through negotiations on CFE while (inconsistently) stressing that any agreement on withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Moldova would have to be linked to a political settlement of the Transnistria issue. He proposed exploring transparency measures instead of "documentary transfer" of the Gadauta base in Georgia, since Georgia was not prepared to give Russia a legal right to use the base. Fried agreed to discuss transparency steps with the Georgians. On Moldova, Antonov claimed Russia was prepared to agree to or discuss most of the proposals in the U.S. paper, but objected to the language referring to "gradual civilianization" of the Russian peacekeeping force, stressing that Russia would keep its peacekeepers in Moldova until there was a settlement of the Transnistria conflict and could not predict what would occur afterward. On the question of flank limits, the sides agreed to exchange views on military concerns about elimination of the flank regime for Russia. Both sides said they would report to Ministers that they were willing to continue talks to seek to resolve the impasse. End summary.

"Preliminary Remarks"

12. (C) In a two-hour meeting March 17 on the eve of the 2 2 meeting in Moscow, Fried told Antonov the U.S. did not have new proposals to offer, stressing that the U.S. had sought to address Russian concerns in its elaboration of the ideas put forth at the October 2 2 and in subsequent meetings. Antonov said that he had been impressed by U.S. proposals made in October, but at every subsequent meeting, the U.S. had walked back its ideas, as he claimed it had with missile defense. Moscow had made a number of proposals at the Madrid meeting, but not one of them was reflected in the U.S. plan. Russia had made a "huge" concession, which may have been a mistake, to allow Georgia and Moldova to be discussed in the context of seeking resolution of the CFE issue, and the U.S. had said it would resolve the issues with Georgia and Moldova. But, the U.S. had not, and now the situation between Russia and Georgia was much worse. The U.S. needed to decide whether it wanted to save the CFE regime, or to use the CFE regime to

try to solve Russian-Georgian and Russian-Moldovan problems. The latter was impossible for Russia. If the U.S. continued to focus only on the Istanbul commitments, we would never reach agreement.

13. (C) Fried rebutted Antonov's argument that the U.S. had walked back its October, 2007 proposals on either CFE or missile defense, pointing out that the U.S.'s parallel actions plan was not intended to solve all the problems between Russia and Georgia and Moldova or to resolve the frozen conflicts, but to try to save the CFE Treaty. Contrary to Antonov's statement, the U.S. proposal contained in the December 26 paper had made major steps in Russia's direction since the October proposals:

- In October, on ratification we had said we would initiate consultations with the Senate; in the December paper, we said we were prepared to move forward rapidly as soon as possible to seek ratification of the treaty;
- in October, we had said we would take no step inconsistent with CFE; in the period since, we had expanded that with the specific idea of observing the national and territorial ceilings contained in the Adapted CFE Treaty (A/CFE);
- in October, we had expressed a commitment to discuss the definition of substantial combat forces; the December paper states our willingness to reach an agreement on a definition within four-to-six months;
- we had developed a fully articulated approach to discussion of Baltic accession to A/CFE.

Fried urged Russia to look again at U.S. proposals on Georgia and Moldova. He stressed that Russia gets ratification of A/CFE, and Russian peacekeepers get to stay in Moldova with the blessing of the OSCE. The Georgians have offered a way

ahead, even though Russian lifting of current sanctions on Abkhazia had not helped the environment.

Georgia: Focus on Transparency Measures

14. (C) Antonov noted that it would be very difficult to reach agreement on Gadauta given the current state of Russian-Georgian relations. He "did not want to mention Kosovo," but when Saakashvili talks about solving Abkhazia and South Ossetia using force, it makes it very difficult for Russia. If Russia were to convey the base at Gadauta to Georgia, it would strengthen Saakashvili's position. The U.S. needed to remember that there were Russian citizens holding Russian passports living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (in response to a question whether Russia questioned Georgia's territorial claim to Abkhazia, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Buzhinskiy said that "your issue is host nation consent; in Abkhazia there is no 'host.'"). The Georgian government would link any issue to its political relationship with Russia. Fried noted that Russia still recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity.

15. (C) Antonov reiterated that if Russia were to send a letter conveying the Gadauta base to Georgia, Russia would have to receive a simultaneous letter authorizing Russian peacekeepers to stay there. Russia needed clarity on the issue. He suggested that if it were not possible to reach agreement on this issue, maybe we should remove the issue from the CFE discussions and focus on transparency measures at Gadauta, including visits, and confidence-building measures, to demonstrate that Russia was not using the base to deploy TLE.

16. (C) Fried noted that the type of clarity Russia wanted on Gadauta was too difficult for the Georgians to provide given the state of Russian-Georgian relations; we were asking Russia to accept a certain degree of ambiguity, but in exchange Russia would get progress on ratifying the A/CFE treaty. He expressed interest in the concept of transparency measures and agreed to raise the idea with the Georgians. CFE expert Anton Mazur cautioned that the U.S. should not give Georgia the impression that such measures would be

ambitious. Fried noted that we would not couch the idea by highlighting what could not be done.

Moldova: Almost, but no Cigar

17. (C) In what appeared (briefly) to be a step forward, Antonov said that Russia was willing to discuss the idea of a conference on Transnistria, would agree to visits to Kolbasa, to language that Russia would "resume" withdrawing munitions "when possible," to provide information on Russian stockpiles, to discuss the terms and substance of the mandate for an OSCE mission, and even to an increase in the number of monitors (but to a "reasonable limit; not 500 or 200"). However, he then stressed that Russia could not prejudge a possible settlement of the Transnistria issue or predict what would come after it, and therefore Russia had difficulty with the phrase "gradual civilianization...as demilitarization efforts are agreed by the parties." This could be one of several possible options following a settlement but Russia could not predict what would happen, and could not determine the outcome for a future Moldovan government. U.S. efforts to suggest inserting language noting that the agreement would not prejudge any political settlement of the Transnistria conflict or subsequent decisions were unavailing, as Antonov said that Russia believed that everything should stay as agreed in the 1992 cease-fire agreement on Moldova until there was a political settlement.

18. (C) Fried pointed out that the concept of "civilianization" was more important than the number of civilian monitors or inspection of munitions and was critical to the Moldovan leadership. EUR DAS Kramer said that one of the problems the U.S. had with the Russian proposal was that there was no mention of Russian peacekeepers ever leaving. For Moldova to accept the deal, there had to be some acknowledgment of civilianization and eventual withdrawal of foreign forces. Antonov's argument that Russia could not prejudge what a future Moldovan government would want was immaterial given that the current Moldovan government accepted the U.S. proposal. EUR/RPM Deputy Director Laurendeau pointed out that the U.S. proposal was open-ended and did not prejudge the settlement. Kramer recalled that

Allies' original position had been no ratification of A/CFE until Russian forces were withdrawn. Fried stressed that in exchange for political symbolism for Moldova, Russia would get to keep its peacekeepers there until the parties agreed otherwise. In response to Kramer's question as to what alternative there was to an agreement on civilianization, Antonov claimed "that's not my department; I only do arms control."

Flank Limits: What's the Military Reason?

19. (C) In a very brief discussion of Russia's insistence that flank limits be eliminated as to Russia but kept as to other members, Antonov asked what the U.S.'s military concerns were about Russia's position. He said he could understand Turkey's or Norway's positions, but what military reasons did the U.S. have for objecting to elimination of flank limits for Russia. Was the U.S. concerned that Russia would station TLE in the flank, or did the U.S. only have political or legal concerns, such as Alliance solidarity?

110. (C) Fried pointed to the contradiction in the Russian position, noting that Russia wants A/CFE ratified but A/CFE contains flank limits for Russia. He emphasized the need to support other Allies' positions, and repeated that we were willing to review the flank limits after entry into force of the A/CFE. DASD Fata expanded on that theme and pointed out that Putin's call for removal of the limits for Russia was based on political, not military analyses. Fried asked what Russia's military reasons were for eliminating the limits. Was Russia concerned Norway or Turkey would build up TLE in their zones? Both sides agreed to exchange military reasons for their positions with respect to the flank issue.

Summing Up

¶11. (C) Fried said that for Allies he would sum up the discussion as follows:

- there was a long discussion of the current positions.
- Russia made a new proposal for a possible transparency regime (instead of documentary transfer), with respect to the Gadauta base in Georgia. Fried agreed to explore the idea with the Georgians;
- there was a long discussion of Moldova. The two sides at first seemed to be closer on steps regarding the peacekeeping issue, but a common understanding did not emerge;
- Both sides agreed to look at the military question of the flank limits;
- Russia did not threaten to withdraw from CFE, nor did the U.S. denounce Russia; and
- Both sides agreed to continue the process, following results of the 2 2 meeting.

¶12. (U) Acting Undersecretary Fried has cleared this cable.
BURNS